



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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BREAKTHROUGH FOR ARIZONA VETERANS ***State Creates New, Streamlined Care for Returning Troops***

PHOENIX – Governor Janet Napolitano has announced a new agreement that will make it easier for returning members of the Arizona National Guard to receive the benefits they deserve.

The Arizona Guard has been deployed worldwide since the beginning of the U.S. war on terror in 2001. Upon returning to the country, soldiers and airmen faced a lengthy medical review and evaluation – at a time at which they were anxious to get home and see their families. Quite often, returning members would choose to waive the medical review, thereby complicating delivery of benefits they would later need.

Now, in a new, negotiated agreement between Arizona Guard, state and federal agencies and private healthcare providers, members will be able to process quickly upon their return, capture their benefits, and still see their families with minimal delay.

The agreement is a Memorandum of Understanding signed Sunday by representatives of the Arizona National Guard, Arizona Department of Veterans' Services, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, Veterans Health Administration, Arizona Department of Economic Security, Arizona Veterans' Services Advisory Commission, TriWest Healthcare Alliance Corporation, Unified Arizona Veterans and the U.S. Department of Labor.

“When Governor Napolitano was made aware of the problem, her reaction was quick and clear – she wanted to improve the process for our service men and women,” said Patrick Chorpensing, Director of the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services. “We began complicated talks that involved a lot of time and a lot of agencies, but we got it done.”

Governor Napolitano added, “When our troops return from overseas, sometimes from deployments that have gone on for months, they deserve to be able to get home, and not be hung up in bureaucracy. I'm glad we've been able to streamline the process for them and for their families.”

The MOU details specific responsibilities for each of the signatory agencies before, during and after a Guard deployment. The agreement also calls for support for families.

A copy of the MOU is attached.

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